

The B2B Landscape in the Industry of Consumer Packaged Goods

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1. Introduction - Discussion

E-Commerce and B2B-exchanges are both hot topics in almost all industries. Because the CPG (Consumer Packaged Goods) industry stands to benefit from future developments within the B2B market, many kinds of platforms are also being launched in the CPG industry.

On the one hand there are horizontal exchanges providing web solutions in specific functional areas. For instance, horizontal exchanges exist in procurement, logistics, HR services and advertising. On the other hand there are vertical exchanges which are created to serve the particular needs of a specific industry. Vertical marketplaces exist in the CPG industry as well as in many other industries.

B2B Exchanges can also be categorized as "buyer-centric", "seller-centric"; or "neutral". Buyer-centric exchanges link many sellers to one (or a few) buyers. They often involve specialized or standardized products and services. Seller-centric exchanges link one (or a few) sellers to many buyers. Neutral exchanges provide a balanced transaction environment which is neither buyer nor seller-centric.

Except for exchanges, institutionals and specialists also influence the development in B2B. UCCnet and ECRnet are both institutionals which are trying to set standards in the area of B2B. The specialists, such as AC Nielsen and Planet U, are companies which are offering a specific knowledge applicable within the B2B business.

Our intention with this paper is to analyze the present B2B landscape and discuss the future development. Hence, we will deal with networking among the exchanges and the impact resulting from such networking. We have concentrated on the categories: open exchanges, private marketplaces and meta markets. Furthermore, we have chosen to only look at the biggest actors in each category, when trying to describe the role of these actors within the B2B-landscape.

Our main source of information has been various homepages. Due to this fact, we realize that our valuation could be somewhat colored. In addition, many of the homepages are insufficient as far as the information content is concerned. For instance, in order to view most information on Global Net Exchange's homepage, a membership is needed.

2. Open Exchanges

Many of the b2b exchanges are specialized in one field. GoFish.com, eNuts.com and Meat Exchange.com are examples of specialized platforms. Due to the demand for exchanges that include a wider range of products, the so called open exchanges have developed. Some of the open exchanges are founded by retailers and could therefore be viewed as retailer oriented. In this category we find Worldwide Retail Exchange and GlobalNetXchange. Rather supplier oriented exchanges are for example Transora and CPG-Market.

We've evaluated these four platforms, which all operate in consumer goods and were founded during year 2000. We've chosen to describe each platform shortly and then

compare them to each other. We'll also try to speculate in the future development, including networking between the exchanges.

2.1 Transora

2.1.1 Background

On June 14th year 2000, 49 of the world's leading food, beverage, and consumer products companies founded Transora.com.

2.1.2 Investors and technology partners

Totally more than 50 major consumer packaged goods companies are involved as investors with the aim to optimize value chain operations and to improve total business productivity via the Internet. The Coca-Cola Company, Heineken International, Nestlé, Procter & Gamble and Unilever are some of the participants.

2.1.3 Services overview

Transora is made for all industry participants (suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers) and it is offering services in four key areas:

- Procurement
- Supply Chain
- Retail,
- Content/Community.

Transora's procurement services include eprocurement tools and services, eprocurement, collaborative purchasing, supplier certification, specialized category purchasing (direct materials), spot purchasing, closed loop replenishment, hedging and international barter exchange services, collaborative commodity, purchasing and market research services.

According to Transora, these services will allow participants to purchase goods through any number of channels and they will link buyers and sellers in a common marketplace by coordinating their interactions. Benefits such as, broader visibility to prospective buyers and sellers, faster and more accurate transaction processing and improved reporting and monitoring functionality are likely to be achieved.

Transora's supply chain services include collaborative planning, forecasting and replenishment (CPFR), transportation and logistics and inventory management.

Supply chain services will increase operational efficiency and effectiveness within and across organizations. Transora identifies increased supply chain visibility, quick response to demand fluctuations, increased sales forecast accuracy, reduced stock-outs and reduced shipping costs as some of the possible benefits to be obtained through employing the supply chain services.

Transora's specific retailer services include customer item catalogs, order management, promotion management and category management.

Transora's retail services are built on the Global Commerce Standards (GCI/EAN/UCC) and will enhance the speed and consistency of information transfer among participants. Specifically, participant will benefit from standardized platforms and tools for customer interaction, improved inventory management and improved order accuracy.

The content, community and communication (c3) services provide consumer goods professionals with industry data and statistics, training, seminars and webcasts, research advisory and business intelligence services, message boards as well as quick polls.

Transora's content and community services provide consumer goods professionals with a wide variety of industry information and tools to keep them informed. The most significant benefits arising are the improved industry knowledge, the easy access to relevant and personalized content and the more efficient connectivity to community members.

2.2 GlobalNetXchange (GNX)

2.2.1 Background

On February 28th, year 2000, the formation of a joint venture in the retail industry named GlobalNetXchange (GNX) was announced. The purpose of the platform is to enable suppliers to get global access to markets and benefit from real time trading, collaboration and information sharing. GNX is open to the entire retail industry and it is attempting to reduce overall costs in procurement, inventory, capacity, and logistics.

2.2.2 Investors and technology partners

Sears, Carrefour, Roebuck & Co. and Oracle Corporation are the founders of the platforms. Sears, Carrefour and Roebuck & Co. are also currently the three majority equity stakeholders in GNX. Sears and Carrefour are two of the world's largest retailers while Oracle is the leader in developing and deploying Internet and exchange technologies and e-business solutions.

2.2.3 Services overview

GNX provides services along three fronts:

- Collaborative supply chain management & optimization
- Global marketplace procurement
- Process transformation.

A cornerstone of GNX is its Internet-enabled supply chain model. This service addresses the area where GNX believes that the most value is lost in today's retail environment: inventory management. The ability to deliver the optimum levels of products through the entire supply chain radically lowers the cost structure. GNX's supply chain services called "collaborative supply planning", "global inventory

visibility” and “collaborative order promising” aim to deliver the capability by providing visibility into future requirements and enabling everyone to respond effectively by adjusting their manufacturing and inventory management processes to coincide with real demand.

In the category procurement GNX offers auctions and internet RFQs / Quotes. GNX supports both seller auctions and buyer (reverse) auctions. A Buyer auction is a reverse-auctioning process that allows buyers to view and manage bids from multiple suppliers online. Auctions should support basic single-item pricing (non-production) events as well as complex market basket production material quoting.

GNX also provides catalog management, which enables suppliers to post the products and services they sell in the marketplace. Suppliers are able to load pricing that is applicable to all exchange members, or optionally, load in buyer-specific pricing for one of their customers.

Buyers access GNX on-line catalogs to find and purchase the products and services they require which are already under contract. GNX’s contract purchase process supports online searching within a catalog of contracted items specific to a buyer/supplier relationship and it will also support payment to the supplier via P-card or on account. Both buyers and suppliers have access to a full suite of HTML inquiries to check order status, history and related information. Besides contract purchases GNX also provides spot purchases.

2.3 Worldwide Retail Exchange (WWRE)

2.3.1 Background

WWRE was founded by seventeen international retailers in March 2000. The WorldWide Retail Exchange is a web-based marketplace, enabling transactions between retailers operating in the food, general merchandise, and drugstore sector.

The WWRE is collective, open to everyone and intended to generate benefits for members and suppliers, not the exchange itself. The marketplace is run as an independent private company and there are no intentions of going public in the future.

2.3.2 Investors and technology partners

As above mentioned, WWRE was founded by seventeen retail companies. Among the founders were Albertson's, Auchan, Casino, CVS, Kingfisher, K-Mart, Marks Spencer, Royal Ahold, Target, Tesco and Safeway Inc. In January 2001 WWRE has grown to include 54 members from Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States.

WWRE has chosen independent technology partners, which are not members of the platform. The main purpose of this decision was that WWRE should have the freedom to partner with any company or companies that could provide the most up-to-date technology available. WWRE today works together with the technology e-business alliance of IBM (NYSE: IBM), i2 Technologies, Inc. (Nasdaq: ITWO) and Ariba, Inc. (Nasdaq: ARBA).

2.3.3. Services overview

The WWRE provides services in three different fields;

- Product development
- eProcurement
- Supply chain

To the first category belong product design and pre-production approval, which should support retailers who create private label products. This service should enable multilingual globally dispersed business teams to work together to create new products in real time.

In the procurement field WWRE is mainly offering auctions, but also a group-buying tool and a catalog-function. The so called eRFP/RFQ/RFI delivers the capability to launch an on-line request for proposal, quote or information with real time tracking of supplier responses. Future product releases will deliver seamless integration between automated demand aggregation, auction execution, and bid analysis.

In the category supply chain the WWRE provides product tracking, which should provide visibility from the time of supplier shipment to retail customer delivery and it will also include real-time exception reporting. Product tracking information will be aggregated in a comprehensive database to facilitate systematic evaluation of supply chain partners. Additional supply chain services, currently in the design stage, will include order tracking and vendor inventory management. The CPFR (Collaborative Planning, Forecasting and Replenishment) function will enable Internet-based collaboration among all supply chain related activities. The WWR will also offer an industry forum.

2.4 CPG-Market (CPG)

2.4.1 Background

Like WWRE, CPG was launched in March 2000. CPG is an internet marketplace customized to provide integrated supply chain solutions to support and complete the commerce cycle between manufacturers and suppliers operating in the European consumer packaged goods Industry. CPG although aims at providing global capability in the future.

2.4.2 Investors and technology partners

The founders of CPG are Nestle SA, Danone SA, SAP AG and Henkel KgaA. In January 2001 the number of investors had grown to 26 suppliers, among them are Barilla, Ferrerri and L'oreal. SAP and Hewlett Packard are CPG`s technology partners and they are also investors.

2.4.3 Services overview

The services from CPG includes:

- eSourcing
- Catalogs
- Supply chain functions
- Physical logistics and communication.

The esourcing service allows members to seek out suppliers on-line, conduct on-line tenders and electronic auctions. CPG's catalog service, erequisitioning, offers the possibility to buy from electronic catalogues on the market place and to place their orders on-line without having to install their own eprocurement software.

The Supply chain services allow manufacturers and their suppliers to exchange information on-line. The so called efulfilment function should provide solutions to physically deliver products and to ensure that the supplier is paid. The service will include "proof of delivery" as well as options to use an electronic payment provider to streamline the invoice payment process. Eintelligence is a communication service, which should provide the right information to the right person by combining external information sources with information calculated from inside the market to provide tailored information to the individual.

2.5 Comparison and trends in the area of open exchanges

In looking at these four open exchanges, we realize that they have the same idea and they all intend to be the leading open exchange. In order to identify factors, which differentiate the exchanges, we've examined these exchanges more closely. We've also recognized some trends.

2.5.1 Comparison - services

In evaluating the services provided by the four different platforms we observe that all platforms provide almost the same key functions; procurement services and supply chain management.

Even if the services have different names we have realized that services provided by the different platforms are similar. For example, Transora and WWRE provide so called collaborative purchasing or group-buying. Most of the platforms are also providing some sort of catalog function. In the category supply chain all platforms provide so called CPFR (collaborative planning, forecasting and replenishment) and transportation and logistics.

There are although related services provided, which differentiate the platforms from each other. Transora and CPG, which are both supplier-oriented platforms provide a communication tool, which should provide the right information to the right person. Furthermore, Transora is as far as we know the only platform (of the four platforms evaluated), which provides so called hedging services and international barter exchanges.

WWRE seems to be the only platform providing a product development tool, which includes product design and pre-production approval. This service should support retailers who create private label products. It should enable multilingual globally dispersed business teams to work together to create new products in real time.

2.5.2 Too many promises?

As already mentioned that the related services differentiate the platforms from each other. We therefore think that these services will be important competitive advantages. In order to provide these services the platforms although will need a lot of know-how in fields such as finance, market research and product development. It is likely to believe that they will have to consult or cooperate with specialists to a greater extent.

In looking at the time schedules we also see that these related services are to be introduced in a very short time and it is questionable whether it is realistic or not. In the case of WWRE all services will be introduced during 2001. In the moment none of the services can actually be provided and in spite of this WWRE states to be the leading internet-based B2B exchange in the retail e-marketplace.

In looking at the homepages of the different platforms we soon realize that everyone promises that they are or will be the leading platform. The citations mentioned beneath are found on the webpages of WWRE, GNX and Transora.

.....the WorldWide Retail Exchange (WWRE), the leading Internet-based business-to-business (B2B) exchange in the retail e-marketplace....

.....GlobalNetExchange (GNX), the world's first comprehensive e-Business marketplace dedicated to the multi-trillion dollar global retail industry.

....Transora will be the largest collaborative effort among food, beverage, and consumer product manufacturers to seek to create efficiencies on a global level over the Internet....

2.5.3. Involvement in more than one exchange

In looking at different companies participating in open exchanges we find that some of the companies are involved in more than one platform. Danone is for example one of the investors in Transora as well as in CPG. Nestlè is another example of a company, which is involved in both Transora and CPG. What is the reason for not investing in only one platform? Even though it is costly to participate in more than one platform, we think that the benefits exceed the disadvantages, while the strategy of participating in more than one platform can be seen as a form of riskspreading. It is not unlikely to believe that some of the platforms will not be able to keep their promises.

2.5.4 Future networking

The main idea of open exchanges is to bring as many buyers and sellers together. Since there is more than one platform this prerequisite can not be efficiently fulfilled.

In order to cover more companies and a greater range of product categories the platforms will have to cooperate.

Another reason for cooperating could be to share technology costs. As the situation is today, all platforms are working with different technology providers. GNX is for example working together with Oracle, WWRE with IBM, i2 Technologies and Ariba and CPG with Hewlett Packard and SAP.

2.5.4.1 Transora and GNX in cooperation

One step in the right direction is the cooperation of GNX and Transora, even if this cooperation does not include technology sharing to any greater extent. The alliance was first announced on January 8, 2001. The so called "megahub" will make it possible for companies to collaborate with multiple trading partners via a single exchange connection. The aim of GNX and Transora is to invite several major exchanges in diverse industries to become equity participants in the new entity.

The megahub will provide exchanges with low cost EDI and XML transport and translation services over the Internet. The megahub supports exchange-to-exchange interoperability, which facilitates cross-value chain applications such as joint promotions management, CPFR and other services between member companies. Exchanges that join the megahub can bundle connectivity and translation capabilities into their service offerings for resale to customers. The megahub allows members of one exchange to avail themselves of the services of another exchange without the expense of building a connection to the other exchange. In this way, participants can collaborate with trading partners across the value chain via multiple exchanges.

2.5.4.2 Transora and UCCnet in cooperation

On the same day as the formation of the megahub was announced, the alliance of Transora and UCCnet was also announced. This cooperation is an example of networking between an exchange and a so called institutional.

UCCnet is a universal foundation for industry standards-based electronic commerce, which is industry supported and sponsored. It synchronizes product information between business-to-business partners through an Internet-based trading community. In addition, UCCnet links to solution providers and trade exchanges, providing companies visibility to a wide range of information and resources.

UCCnet leverages the legacy of the Uniform Code Council (UCC), an organization that establishes and promotes global standards for product identification and related electronic communications. From trading partners to solution providers and business-to-business Internet marketplaces, users are able to form collaborative trading relationships based on industry standards and synchronized compliant data through UCCnet.

The alliance with UCCnet enables Transora to offer global item and location registry standards - the fundamental building block to Transora's item catalog. Transora intends to have item and location catalog capabilities available to participants during the first quarter of 2001.

Transora's alliance with UCCnet will enable all participants who adopt the UCCnet standards to store their item information in one place, while ensuring industry validation through UCCnet's Global Registry Services. Over time, standards-based data can form the backbone for a host of sophisticated services that simplify manufacturer-retailer relationships and transactions for those companies participating in Transora. Order management, promotions management, and CPFR can all be offered once the industry formalizes standards-based trading relationships.

3. Private Marketplaces

Besides the open exchanges so called private marketplaces have developed during the last years. These platforms are founded by one single company, in the evaluated cases a retailer, and they are extremely purchase oriented.

Although companies join open exchanges such as CPG, GNX, Transora or WWRE, leading companies often choose to develop their own private marketplaces. Tesco and Safeway are for example both members of WWRE, but have also both developed private marketplaces. Sainsbury's, which also has its own marketplace, has used the services on GNX for example by buying cheese for Sainsbury's private label.

Why do companies invest in private marketplaces? As already mentioned it could be a security sanction, if the collective platform should bust, the company would not stand without electronic B2B access. From our point of view, the most important reason is although that the companies want to tie their suppliers closer to the company. If they would do all selling and buying over an open exchange it would mean that all companies would have access to their suppliers / customers. According to the supply chain director at Tesco, their aim is to do a little bit of selling/ buying via exchanges, but the rest over their private marketplace.

Beneath we've evaluated two examples of private marketplaces, Tesco Information Exchange (TIE) and Sainsbury's Information Direct (SID).

3.1 Tesco Information Exchange (TIE)

During year 2000 Tesco has developed a private marketplace in cooperation with GE Information Services (GE). The linked suppliers have access to information such as electronic point of Sale (EPOS) data, track sales and internal telephone /maildirectroy.

The aim of the system is among other things to provide an efficient tool for promotions management. The system will allow joint planning, tracking and evaluation of promotions, which should reduce the effort to set up promotions as well as minimizing stock outs and production waste.

Suppliers who want to benefit from TIE has to pay a joining fee as well as a monthly subscription. This fee is banded according to the size of company calculated by annual turnover with Tesco. This system makes it possible to join for smaller suppliers also. The monthly subscription covers day to day running costs, there is no additional charge for access to the service nor for any data volumes – the data itself

is provided free of charge. The fees should not cover any profit, but the set up and running costs.

The key benefit of TIE should be improved communication and reduced response times which ensure on-shelf availability for customers. Currently are about 400 suppliers already using TIE.

3.2 Sainsbury's Information Direct (SID)

SID was launched in the summer of 1998 and is like TIE a portal for electronic business-to-business relationship between Sainsbury and its business partners. The component sites enable suppliers to share promotions, view daily commodity data (including sales, customer availability, depot stock, supplier service, depot issues, range of forecasts) of process orders.

The main focus of SID has been to support the food supply chain, today SID is although also offering other tools. Unfortunately we haven't been able to study these tools, since only members have access.

As part of Sainsbury's commitment to Efficient Consumer Response (ECR), the industry initiative for collective improvement to the supply chain, SID components are free to suppliers.

4. Meta Markets

Besides cooperation such as the already mentioned megahub, meta markets have started to develop. A meta market should stand above the open exchanges and tie them together. Meta auctions are the cornerstone of the meta market concept.

4.1 Meta auctions

A meta auction is an auction where many different underlying exchanges are tied together and all auctions taking place within the meta market can be viewed of all participating "partner platforms". A meta market enables exchanges with various technological platforms to be linked with each other and it enables the "partner platforms" to simultaneously follow the auction process independent of where it originally started.

A meta market can be built up through either a client managed software or a utility service. Both methods create a system of synchronized information flow.

4.2 The meta transactional model

In a meta auction, an auction created on one exchange platform is simultaneously replicated to other exchanges. The meta auction process in itself is powered by a Replicated Internet Auction System (RIAS) that allow independent auction providers with an integrated distribution system architecture. The meta market allows all participating exchanges to follow the exact same auction regardless of where it originated from, and any event such as a new bid can be viewed immediately by all "partner exchanges".

The meta infrastructure allows exchanges in the same vertical market space to offer sellers a greater market exposure for their auctions and for the buyers it offers the opportunity to choose from a large range of auctions. For sellers, joining a meta market means higher potential sales to a lower cost, whilst buyers enjoy the benefits of having many auctions with many competing sellers to choose from, which should lead to lower prices.

At the moment, a lot of merchants are being forced to cross auction their inventory in order to gain a satisfying market exposure. There is a transactional fragmentation in the market with plenty of specialized exchanges. The transactional cost for getting involved in many different exchanges are of course accordingly high. Through linking many exchanges together, meta markets solve problems related to transactional fragmentation and it enables exchanges to offer merchants greater market exposure. For buyers it offers participants a greater diversity of auctions from which to choose.

Vertical saturation is a result of the fast speed of the B2B market which is shrinking the space between exchanges. While new exchanges are entering the market, they create vertical submarkets in the search for market shares. The result is a lower amount of users per exchange, which in turn leads to fewer bids per auction and therefore makes the market less efficient. The meta market auctions reduce the effects of vertical saturation by shifting the focus from fixed market share to revenue capture by internal transaction efficiency. As we learned, the meta market allows numerous of exchanges to participate in the auctions provided.

Another trend facing the B2B market is the increase of liquidity barriers as the numbers of exchanges sky rockets. Buyers don't have the patience to engage in hundreds of different auctions taking place on different exchange platforms, instead they turn to auction portals such as Auction Watch, where information is aggregated in a more sufficient way. It's easy to understand that a meta market is a very attractive market place to impatient buyers, who are eager to enjoy a fast and full ranging service.

4.3 Global Trade Master (GTM)

GTM is a concept, which is aiming to implement the ideas of a meta market place. GTM has its origin in the collaborative platform for the ECR community. Behind the core team, the project manager and the steering board, a consortium constituted of EDS, Oracle, SAP and HP is to be found. Among the standard setters we find UCC.

GTM has identified problems that exchanges and participants possible are going to face. Among these problems we find examples such as Internal conflicts, functions promised and not delivered, collaborative functions missing, high costs, the lack of standards and E2E integration. By identifying problems GTM has moved a step further in the direction of being able to provide the market with a needed service.

The objective of GTM is to create a broad net of exchanges. Through linking different exchanges together, the aim is to build an effective meta market, where numerous companies can take part. Retailers, manufacturers and suppliers are required to offer a low cost infrastructure and a complete and extensive offering as well as a guaranteed service. The companies are free to choose their own software.

As far as exchanges are concerned, all existing exchanges on the market are of interest for GTM. Other exchanges will be respected and competition between GTM and other exchanges must not be the case. Although tmgiweb.com can be seen as a competitor.

The meta market is supposed to add value to retail and CPG companies through the efficient and effective global virtual bundling and matching of supply and demand. For the exchanges involved in the meta market, we note possible advantages such as an increased retention of buyers and sellers by the resolving of transactional fragmentation.

4.4 tmgiweb.com

tmgiweb.com is also developing a concept similar to the one of GTM. They want to create a marketplace where the needs are provided for practicing: business to consumer, business to business and business to supplier.

The consumer marketplace enables consumers to place orders after looking through aggregated catalogues. The consumer then receives a notice of the successful process of his or her order. Finally, the purchased goods are delivered and the consumer has access to the whole process history if he/she wants to go back and look at something in particular. During the whole process, there is an online support available for the consumer.

As far as the retail marketplace is concerned, the retail buyers are offered a variety of services. Beside auctions, the meta market place provides the retail buyers with online training programs as well as new product announcements and other industry events. There is an efficient connection to both wholesalers and consumers. In the latter case, the online shopping works as per statement above.

When it comes to the supplier marketplace, the services provided are similar to the ones offered to the retailers. Cooperative buying is added to the list of services.

5. Conclusion

In trying to look into the B2B landscape, we've analyzed and tried to describe some of the main actors, concentrating on open exchanges, private marketplaces and meta markets.

Today, most companies are members of one or more open exchanges, but in some cases they also have their own marketplaces. Therefore, the competition among the platforms is immense and we don't think that all platforms will be able to survive on their own. In the future, we will probably see many exchanges merging or cooperating. An example illustrating the future trends, is the evolving concept of the so called meta market.

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